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OPEDA Newsletter

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

ORGANIZATION OF PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES OF THE U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Vol. 8

JANUARY 1956

No. 1

A BRIGHT NEW YEAR IS AHEAD FOR OPEDA. * A NEW TYPE OF NEWSLETTER is launched with
We predict a year of great accomplishment. * this issue, to keep members up-to-date on
Your officers and staff wish for each of * OPEDA's legislative and other activities.
you a year of great satisfactions-- * It will be issued more frequently, especial-
satisfactions which come only from full * ly when Congress is in session. Ten issues
living and worthy service. * will cost about the same as four printed.

LEGISLATION COMING UP

Federal-State Retirement Credit -- The Advisory Committee: Chris Henderson; J. C. Dykes, SCS; W. T. Spanton, Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare; Vic Stapleton, Dept. of State; and Hale Brown, Dept. of Justice, met December 13 and made definite plans to renew efforts to secure enactment of this legislation during the current session. Special attention will be given to the matter of the Executive attitude toward this bill.

Retirement -- Latest developments incorporated in the Johnston Bill include: base retirement on 2% times the best 3 years average salary times years of service instead of the present 1½% formula; increase employee contributions from 6% to 7%; and increase family survivorship benefits. Employees with 30 years service would be eligible for retirement. Penalties for retirement prior to age 60 would be reduced. OPEDA's Economic Committee will study this legislation and bring its findings to Council for action.

Farm Legislation -- New farm programs will likely be set up this year. This will necessitate more USDA personnel, thus affording wider chances for promotion of present employees.

President's Message -- The President's message of January 5 included three items of interest.

(1) Most controversial of the administration-backed proposals is the move to coordinate Civil Service retirement with Social Security--essentially the Kaplan Plan. A vote on this matter by employees of the State of California overwhelmingly opposed coordination 43,203 to 12,859.

(2) Executive pay increase to boost the \$14,800 classified pay ceiling to \$17,000 and increase the pay of appointive government officials.

(3) Prepaid group health insurance for Federal employees and their dependents.

Other Important Legislation that may be Pushed: Protection of employees against salary cuts in case of down-grading; greater appeal rights for non-veterans; and recognition of Federal employee unions as bargaining agents for their members.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

1955 Most Successful Year in OPEDA's 27-Year History, reports C. E. Burkhead, Chairman of OPEDA Membership Committee. Over 1,600 new members were added, more than ever before in a single year. SCS won top honors, adding 605 new members. AMS was second with 333; ARS third with 216; and REA fourth with 86. Top honors for largest percentage of potential members signed up goes to FES with 85%. FCS was second with 80% and ACPS third with 67%. Either way you look at it, the record looks good.

Bigger Record Expected for 1956 -- OPEDA's goal for 1956 is 2,000 new members. Why not ask one of your fellow-workers to join today? Dues are \$3 for one year or \$5 for two years. (Note from Staff Office of OPEDA: Over 2,300 members have paid their 1956 dues, and 1350 have paid through 1957.)

HIGHLIGHTS OF OPEDA LUNCHEON MEETINGS

Jerry Klutz Sums Up For OPEDA -- At the OPEDA November luncheons in Washington and at Beltsville, Jerry Klutz, editor of the Federal Diary of the WASHINGTON POST-TIMES HERALD, pointed out legislative straws in the wind: another pay bill, which professional societies are backing; higher entrance pay to attract certain professionals to government service; and proposals to raise ceilings on super-grades. The Civil Service Commission is considering re-establishment of the professional ratings. The House Appropriations Committee is watching with interest the Health, Education, and Welfare Department study of salaries and promotions of its scientific people. Government workers are oversold on their retirement system. During the past few years Social Security has made such rapid strides it has dwarfed Civil Service retirement. Republicans and Democrats both favor consolidation of the two systems. A health plan will probably come up in January, with the government paying $1/3$ to $1/2$ of the premiums.

Beltsville's October Meeting -- Under Secretary of Agriculture True D. Morse said that in both large and small organizations there is always the problem of keeping individuals tied together in their thinking and efforts--in the feeling of being a part of the organization. He referred to a memorandum on "Qualities for people working in an organization." The author of the memo pointed out that before you try to function in an organization, ask yourself whether you want to be an individual operator or a part of an organization. As a part of an organization you have to team up with others to work effectively.

Washington's October Meeting -- John W. Macy, Executive Director of the U. S. Civil Service Commission, gave the following objectives as the basis to a Federal personnel program for professional people: (1) provide a favorable climate for full development of skills; (2) provide sufficiently flexible personnel system to serve as an aid instead of a deterrent in the selection and recognition of personnel; (3) provide for participation of professional personnel in the personnel processes. Mr. Macy said that programs for the future will put a high premium on professional skills and that personnel divisions should try to raise the quality level of people recruited. He suggested paying travel expenses of promising prospects considering government service; finding the reason for indifference or hostility toward Federal service on some campuses; and more progress in fringe benefits such as health and medical insurance.

CHANGE IN OPEDA STAFF -- Mrs. Lila Meyer who has served OPEDA so well has taken a full-time job with the Department Office of Personnel. Mrs. Ida Lee Sliney, a former employee of the Department, has taken Mrs. Meyer's place. OPEDA's office is still Room 507, Administration Bldg., Phone 5591, P. O. Box 381, Washington, D. C.

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